II. SPECIFICATION AMENDMENTS

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 5, line 6 through line 7 as rewritten below:

~~Fig. 5 is a~~Figs. 5A-5B are flow ~~chart~~charts depicting the steps of a routine run by a mail processor in the system of Fig. 1;

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 6, line 8 through line 35 as rewritten below:

Processor 150 includes rate storage 156 for storing rate schedule data relating to different courier services. Because of the volume of the data involved, storage 156 in this instance is dedicated, and a non-volatile memory which may be an electrically erasable programmable read-only memory (EEPROM), a flash EEPROM, or a battery-backed random-access memory (RAM). The rate schedule data may be stored in a manner typified by tables or other formats to facilitate the search by microprocessor ~~115~~155 for correct postage rates for the mail piece being processed. Other related information for use in optimum methods to obtain postage may also be stored in storage 156. As is well known, the cost of delivery of a mail piece to a destination depends upon not only the weight of the mail piece, but also the particular courier service used, the destination zone, the class of shipment, and the selected service options. For example, in the United States, courier services such as USPS, United Parcel Service (UPS) and FedEx each have independent, different postage rates, and charges for different service options. For instance, USPS has various rates for first, second and third mailing classes, standard (A) classes, express mail service, priority mail service, parcel post service, book rate service, etc. UPS

levies extra charges for service options such as the collect on delivery (COD), delivery confirmation response (DCR) and declared value (DV) options.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 11, line 30 through page 12, line 3 as rewritten below:

After the user decides to proceed with the printing of the document, computer 103 at step 445 generates an ensemble of control characters representative of the above user responses. At step 450, computer 103 transmits the data stream representative of the text of the document to mail processor ~~155~~150, along with a control sequence comprising the ensemble of control characters preceded by a header. This header comprises a special character pattern and contains information on the length of the ensemble.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 15, line 9 through line 31 as rewritten below:

In a company environment, mail processor 150 is most likely connected to a number of computers similar to computer 103 in a network arrangement to generate mail contents. In addition, in such an environment, an accounting of the postage expenses may be necessary to charge back individuals or departments responsible therefor. To that end, the postage payment routine of Fig. 5 performed in mail processor 150 can readily be modified. Specifically, ~~at~~after step 501, referring to FIG. 5A microprocessor 155 can also search 502 the data stream representing the text of the document for the author's identity and/or authorization, which may be his/her name in the signature block, telephone number, preselected password and/or code appearing in the text. With the identity and/or authorization

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information, microprocessor 155 can attribute 503 the corresponding postage expense to the author himself/herself or to his/her department while the mail content is being generated. This is advantageous because otherwise, if the charge-back accounting is performed after the preparation of the mail content, for instance, when the postage indicium is applied on an envelope, special equipment such as a scanner for scanning the indicium may be required for that purpose.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 24, line 29 through page 25, line 11 as rewritten below:

A second technique for reducing the mail transit time in the traditional check mailing method will now be described. In accordance with this second technique, the contents of the payer's mail piece, including a remittance in some specified amount, are indicated with certain encrypted information within the postage indicium on the mail piece. In the alternative, the contents are indicated by other markings printed on the mail piece, or onto a selected area of a sheet of paper inside the mail piece such that the markings are exposed through an appropriate window in the envelope. The encrypted information includes such detail as is required by the payee to establish confidence in the payer's assertion that remittance is being made. For example, the encrypted information may include the payer's digital signature (guaranteeing the contents subject to a legal penalty), the payer's account number with the payee, the payer's bank account number, the amount remitted, etc. In one embodiment, an indication could be included on the mail piece that affirms that the content is included in the mail piece. Referring to FIG. 5B, information regarding the content of the mailpiece is inputted or received 531. Information related to

the content of the mailpiece could then be included 532 in the postage indicia. The indication could cause a processor of the mail piece to inform a third party of the information while the mail piece is being sent.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 27, line 10 through line 15 as rewritten below:

Moreover, mail processor 150 may allow the user to obtain shipping rates of different couriers (e.g., UPS, FedEx and USPS) and to compare rates among such couriers. In one embodiment, this could occur through an interface other than the interface that is used to receive information concerning the mail piece and information concerning a value of the postage. It may also be capable of determining the best method of shipment based upon user parameters such as cost and speed.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 27, line 29 through line 36 as rewritten below:

It will be appreciated that mail processor 150 can communicate with a third party certification authority 120 (e.g., a digital notary) through a communication network 110 (e.g., the Internet) to provide verification to the sender that the recipient has (1) received the transmitted data, (2) accessed the transmitted data, and/or (3) converted the transmitted data to plain text.

Please insert the following on page 29, line 13 as written below:

--We Claim:--